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Viewing cable 08BUENOSAIRES759, ARGENTINA: FBI'S DEPUTY DIRECTOR PISTOLE DISCUSSES

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- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
08BUENOSAIRES759	2008-06-03 17:27	2011-08-30 01:44	SECRET	Embassy Buenos Aires

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.lanacion.com.ar/1364384-el-temor-oculto-del-gobierno-a-nuevos-actos-terroristas>

VZCZCXYZ0001
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHBU #0759/01 1551727
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
P 031727Z JUN 08
FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1231
INFO RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
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RHMCSSU/FBI WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
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S E C R E T BUENOS AIRES 000759

SIPDIS

WHA/BSC FOR DRUCKER, FRIEDMAN, AND SHOWELL
NEA/IR FOR HWOOSTER
S/CT FOR VIRGINIA PALMER AND ARNOLD SIERRA
NSC FOR JUAN ZARATE
FBI FOR DD PISTOLE AND OIO AD TOM FUENTES AND AMERICAS UNIT
DOJ FOR DAG BRUCE SWARTZ

REF: A. BUENOS AIRES 00746
1B. BUENOS AIRES 00702

Classified By: Ambassador E. Anthony Wayne for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

¶1. (SBU) Summary: During his May 21-22 visit to Argentina, FBI Deputy Director John Pistole met with senior officials of the Argentine government, the Argentine Jewish community, and President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner (ref A) to discuss U.S.-Argentine security cooperation. Those leaders thanked Pistole for the USG's behind-the-scenes support in ensuring a positive outcome on the Marrakech vote to issue arrest warrants for suspects involved in the 1994 AMIA bombing. Justice Minister Anibal Fernandez updated Pistole on GOA efforts to combat trafficking in persons and his commitment to implement the new federal law. President CFK assured the USG of her continued support for international collaboration against terrorism (ref A). Press coverage of the visit was generally favorable and contributed to a GOA and public perception that the USG-GOA relationship is on course and improving. End Summary.

The Visit

¶2. (C) FBI Deputy Director John S. Pistole met May 21-22 with senior officials of the Argentine government, including President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner; Secretary of Intelligence Hector Icazuriaga and Deputy Secretary Francisco Larcher; Minister of Justice and Security Anibal Fernandez; Chief of Federal Police Nestor Vallecca; senior federal and provincial judicial and police officials; and visited with Jewish leaders at the site of the 1994 terrorist bombing of the Argentine Israeli Mutual Association (AMIA). Media coverage of the visit was generally favorable, signaling positive steps in the bilateral relations between the two countries.

Ministry of Justice and Security

¶3. (U) On May 21, Ambassador Wayne hosted a lunch for FBI Deputy Director John Pistole and Argentine Justice and Security Minister Anibal Fernandez. DCM and FBI Legat also attended.

¶4. (SBU) The Ambassador started the meeting by congratulating Minister Fernandez on recent drug seizures and arrests in the north of Argentina. The Minister stated that operation was successful and important because of the level of traffickers arrested in addition to the 500 kilos of marijuana seized. The Ambassador mentioned \$600,000 funding available to Bolivia, Peru, and Argentina for combating narcotics trafficking, and asked if the Minister had received a letter from his Bolivian counterpart regarding these funds. The Minister said he had not received any such letter.

¶5. (C) Minister Fernandez responded to a question about the new money laundering law by saying he was working diligently on implementing the new law and personally guaranteed that the law will effectively address narcotics money laundering and terrorism financing. He acknowledged the Tri-border area (TBA) of Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay as a source of terrorism financing, but stated the GOA needs specific information to act. The Minister stated the GOA must prosecute narcotics trafficking because it also finances terrorism, but noted that terrorism is also financing by legitimate activities.

¶6. (SBU) DD Pistole inquired how the FBI could assist the GOA with its crime problem and the Minister responded that

Argentina's crime rates and specifically homicides rates were significantly less than neighboring countries, as well as the United States. However, the Minister stopped publishing national crime statistics, he said, because most of the statistics provided by the provinces were false.

¶7. (SBU) Minister Fernandez noted that Argentina's trafficking in persons (TIP) law was only ten days old, but already six or seven important TIP investigations were underway. He recently denounced in the press a judge who released a man who consorted with a 17-year old girl prostituted by an organized ring in Barrio Flores in Buenos Aires City. He speculated that the Argentine Federal Police (PFA) and judge knew of the prostitution ring's operations and failed to act, and he felt personally embarrassed by this unacceptable situation. Minister Fernandez said that, in the past, police corruption was covered-up to preserve the reputation and image of the PFA, but not under his administration. He said corruption by local police was a really serious problem in the Northwestern provinces of Argentina in dealing with trafficking rings. The Ambassador cited police corruption problems encountered by the Argentine group Mothers Against Paco (crack cocaine).

¶8. (U) The Minister stated that the majority of the prostitution cases involve girls from Paraguay. He commended Paraguayan President-elect Logo's recent announcement to place his sister in charge of Paraguay's anti-TIP efforts and opined that the designation indicated a serious commitment to address Paraguay's TIP problems. He emphasized the importance addressing the social consequences of TIP and providing support to victims. He described the June 11-12 conference he was organizing to inform prosecutors and judges what the new federal anti-trafficking law and expressed appreciation for the U.S. experts who will participate.

¶9. (U) The Ambassador inquired about the status of judicial reform and the new code of federal criminal procedure proposed by the previous Minister of Justice. The Minister responded that he is working on improving the efficiency of the judicial system, and noted that in the United States accused persons go to trial in eight to nine months, but in Argentina persons arrested today would not go to trial before ¶2010. He said introducing a judicial reform bill is a priority.

¶10. (U) DD Pistole noted the international threat posed by cyber crimes, especially organized computer attacks against national infrastructure. Minister Fernandez said the GOA is serious in combating Internet child pornography. DD Pistole offered training at the FBI's Innocent Images center in Calverton, Maryland. The Minister expressed strong interest, and said the GOA would put such training to good use.

¶11. (U) The Minister mentioned ongoing social conflicts in Argentina and expressed the need to improve the distribution of wealth. He noted that in 1985 the upper 10% of Argentine society earned 10 times more than the bottom 10%, but now (2005) the upper 10% earn 38 times more than the bottom 10%.

¶12. (S) DD Pistole commended the Minister for the GOA's successful efforts to reinstate the AMIA Red Notices. Minister Fernandez expressed his gratitude for the assistance provided to the GoA's AMIA investigation by FBI Assistant Director Tom Fuentes and the Legat. He stated that AMIA is a very important and sensitive matter for the GOA. Interpol's decision to issue new AMIA Red Notices was very important to his government. (Fernandez made no mention that an arrest warrant would be filed the following day for ex-president Carlos Menem and others for allegedly participating in a cover-up of an "Argentine connection" to the AMIA attack -- ref B.)

¶13. (C) DD Pistole expressed USG concerns that Hizballah will retaliate against Israeli targets abroad for the assignation of Hizballah leader Imad Mughniyah. The Minister noted that the GOA was concerned and alert, especially given the 1992 and 1994 Hizballah bombings in Buenos Aires. He opined that

former President Menem's inconsistent foreign policy towards the Middle East made Argentina more vulnerable to terrorist attacks, while the more consistent policies of the Kirchners made Argentina less vulnerable. Specifically he said Menem maintained good relations with too many Middle East figures connected at least indirectly to terrorism. Minister Fernandez explained that President Kirchner's relationship

with Venezuelan President Chavez who has close relations with Iran should not be confused with the Kirchners' policies regarding Iran, and he cited the Kirchners' decision to not meet with the Iranian president.

Federal Police Chief

¶14. (U) Federal Police Chief Nestor Vallecca reviewed his participation in the INTERPOL General Assembly meeting at Marrakech and praised the FBI's behind-the-scenes support and counsel by FBI Assistant Director Tom Fuentes, a member of INTERPOL's Executive Committee. Vallecca noted that he and his INTERPOL chief learned a great deal in the process, especially diplomacy. In discussing crime issues, Vallecca complained that while Argentina has banking regulations and money laundering/terrorism financing laws, banks are not reporting suspicious activity reports (SAR) to the Unidad de Informacion Financiera - UIF (Argentina's version of FinCEN). Vallecca noted that the majority of cases at the UIF are initiated by police investigations, and that while UIF analysts and prosecutors are dedicated professionals, he feels vigorous prosecutions are lacking. Regarding trafficking in persons (TIP), Vallecca admitted it is an evolving problem that his agency recently received jurisdiction to investigate. The AFP chief acknowledged that his agency has much to learn regarding the issue, and welcomes any training and assistance from the FBI in dismantling organized trafficking in persons. The AFP chief pledged his commitment to working with the FBI and the USG on issues of interest and concern to both countries.

Federal, provincial and city officials share their concerns

¶15. (U) Senior justice and law enforcement officials from the federal government, provinces of Buenos Aires and Cordoba, and the City of Buenos Aires discussed their special interests in crime issues at a reception hosted by the Ambassador in honor of DD Pistole's visit and the FBI 100th anniversary. Provincial prosecutors and judges expressed keen interest in improving their knowledge and skill in pursuing TIP cases. The prosecutor generals of Cordoba and Buenos Aires province are working with the GOA to develop TIP protocols and are looking to the USG for assistance. Cordoba's AG, Dario Vezzaro, is himself hosting a TIP conference and requested USG participation. Both the FBI and the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Service (ICE) pledged to participate with subject matter experts. The officials expressed their appreciation for the USG's assistance in training police officers and prosecutors over the years and welcomed our continued support.

AMIA

¶16. (U) In his visit to the rebuilt site of the Argentine-Israeli Mutual Association (AMIA) building, DD Pistole laid a wreath in memory of the victims of the terrorist attack that killed 85 persons. Leaders of AMIA and the co-located Delegation of Argentine-Israeli Associations (DAIA) welcomed the visit and thanked DD Pistole for the USG's unwavering support and technical assistance by the FBI

in this case. AMIA president Luis Grynwald noted that 2007 was an important year for the organization with the victory over the INTERPOL red notices and former president Argentine President Nestor Kirchner's speech at the UN General Assembly. AMIA and DAIA leaders voiced their concerns once again over what they characterized as a growing Iranian presence in Latin America and reiterated a call for INTERPOL member nations to detain the Iranian officials pursuant to Red Notices authorized by Interpol's General Assembly in Marrakech. Jewish leaders noted that they share a common bond with the United States in that both are principal

targets of Islamic extremists anywhere in the world and should therefore resolve to work together to deter the threat. Also of great concern to Jewish leaders is Hizballah's growing influence within the impoverished areas of many countries, especially in Latin America, which is fertile ground for recruitment and radicalization.

¶17. (C) During the Ambassador's reception, Ambassador Guillermo Gonzalez, MFA's point man in the AMIA case, expressed his utmost appreciation to DD Pistole for the FBI's role in helping the GOA secure approval for the INTERPOL Red Notices. Ambassador Gonzalez specifically commended FBI Assistant Director Tom Fuentes' invaluable insights and influence at the organization's Executive Committee and General Assembly, noting the FBI's respected status (and that of AD Fuentes) helped influence other EC delegates to focus on the facts of the case.

Comment

¶18. (SBU) The Pistole visit was another excellent opportunity for USG to showcase its longstanding commitment to bilateral cooperation on issues of mutual concern. The visit received positive media coverage which showcased the mutual benefits of our close cooperation on sensitive issues, a lesson that is always worth repeating here.
WAYNE